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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 24 April 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. KLINK (Observer for the Holy See) welcomed the outcome of the World Summit for Children and the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had already obtained many signatures. The Holy See also welcomed the Executive Board's firm support for the principle of a "first call for children" and the Board's demonstrated willingness to integrate UNICEF programmes more fully into the long-term development efforts of recipient countries. The Holy See did not wish to comment on the question of whether UNICEF should focus its efforts on existing programmes or embark on new programmes; however, it encouraged countries to continue to contribute generously towards the financing of all programmes aimed at providing effective protection for children and mothers.

2. Several delegations wanted UNICEF to involve itself further with family planning. The Holy See believed that, while the efforts of UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) were complementary and even similar in certain respects, each of those organizations, as they themselves had recalled, had its own sphere of activity, and UNICEF should not exceed the limits of its mandate. UNICEF could not be all things to all people; moreover, in its advocacy, it did encourage birth spacing. In fact, UNICEF was to be commended for not using its limited resources to duplicate the activities of other agencies. Furthermore, its function was to safeguard the lives of children, before as well as after birth.

3. In order to ensure the success, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of its activities in the long term, UNICEF must integrate them in the programmes of recipient countries, while continuing to respect local cultural, religious and social traditions.

4. Mr. TCHERNOZEMSKI (Observer for Bulgaria) said that his country had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had begun to adapt its legislation accordingly. Bulgaria was also preparing a national action plan for children. Children continued to suffer throughout the world. The dramatic situations in Eastern and Central Europe and the consequences of the Persian Gulf crisis offered examples of that. Children must be helped wherever they were. Despite its own serious problems, Bulgaria had been prompt in sending aid to the children of Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Bulgarian National Committee for UNICEF looked forward to the time when it would be financially independent with UNICEF assistance and could thus provide substantial material assistance to the children of Africa, Asia and anywhere there was need. UNICEF should make its policies for dealing with certain new situations more flexible. It was not necessary to divert funds from one area to another; rather, new ways should be explored and efforts should be made to mobilize additional resources from new partners. Bulgaria was prepared to join in that effort.

5. Mrs. DIOP (Observer for Senegal) said that her country attached the utmost importance to children's issues, as evidenced by its active participation in the preparation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Senegal had already ratified, and the World Summit for Children. Senegal had set up a national committee on the implementation of the Convention and had drawn up a multidisciplinary plan of action which was fully integrated in the national economic development plan and would improve the condition of children in both the long and the short terms by fostering overall development. At the same time, in spite of restructuring and reforms, there was such a high degree of poverty that the goals of the Plan of Action for children in the 1990s could not be achieved without sustained cooperation between North and South. The workshop to be held on 16 June 1991 on the extremely precarious situation of African children might highlight the need to ensure that those children had their basic needs met after having been saved from death.

6. She welcomed the progress made in universal immunization and other measures aimed at protecting child health. She welcomed also the emphasis placed, in achieving the goals for the 1990s, on the need for a broader development strategy encompassing debt relief, economic recovery, poverty reduction, environmental protection and the elimination of political hot spots.

7. Her delegation favoured strengthening the UNICEF staff but hoped that that undertaking would be reflected in the field, particularly in Africa, by concrete programmes that would foster long-term socio-economic development. She welcomed the progress achieved in the implementation of the Bamako Initiative, particularly with regard to the strengthening of primary health-care services.

8. Achieving the goals for the 1990s also depended on enhanced coordination between all international organizations whose activities had a direct or indirect bearing on children's situation; that would also help to sensitize public opinion to children's plight.

9. Mr. HUSLID (Observer for Norway) said the Executive Board's debates reflected the interest of developing and industrialized countries alike in UNICEF activities and the enormity of the challenges which the international community had to meet in order to create a better world for all children. To achieve the goals set out in the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, however, UNICEF required resources. There had been an impressive increase in contributions in recent years as a result of fund-raising efforts, but the total budget was still very small in relation to needs. Donors with the means to do so should display greater generosity and increase their contributions to the Fund's general resources in particular.

10. The Norwegian Government attached high priority to the situation of children at the national level - a Ministry for Children and Family Affairs had just been established - and in the context of its cooperation with

(Mr. Huslid, Observer, Norway)

developing countries. While welcoming the priority given to Africa, he noted that, despite deteriorating economic conditions there over the past decade, the share of resources allocated for the region had hardly increased between 1987 and 1990. That share should be increased during the next few years.

11. UNICEF had been charged with analysing the measures taken by countries to achieve the goals set for the 1990s. However, that must not be interpreted to mean that UNICEF could use its scarce resources to assist countries that were relatively well off. Furthermore, UNICEF activities in Eastern and Central Europe should be kept within the limits set in Executive Board decision 1990/5, with Fund assistance concentrated on developing countries, where the needs of children were far more urgent.

12. Despite its importance, the situation of increasing numbers of children living in especially difficult circumstances was not receiving enough attention, perhaps because it was not easily quantifiable. One should not forget, however, that activities must have children as their centre, including children who were difficult to reach, and that programmes to improve children's environment did not automatically mean that the situation of the children themselves was really improved.

13. In many developing countries population growth was straining social services, depleting natural resources and contributing, together with AIDS, to maternal and infant mortality. UNICEF must therefore give greater priority in its operational activities, as it did in its advocacy activities, to family planning, an issue which the Executive Director had not discussed sufficiently in his report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part II)), despite the Board's instructions in decision 1990/7. It was not enough to advocate in favour of birth spacing any more than it was enough to rely on a stabilization of birth rates as a consequence of reduced child mortality. The number of children who were AIDS victims - infected or orphaned by the disease - was reaching frightening proportions. His delegation appreciated the initiatives taken by UNICEF in that area and supported the Fund's efforts to strengthen those activities. In general, only sustained, long-term action would make it possible to achieve the goals of the Plan of Action.

14. Mr. McLEARY (Non-Governmental Organizations Committee with UNICEF) thanked UNICEF for having insisted that non-governmental organizations should be present at the World Summit for Children, thus allowing them, for the first time, to play a role at a meeting at that level. Non-governmental organizations, aware of the importance of the Summit and the Convention on the Rights of the Child - evidence that the child was recognized as a key factor in the progress and development of the human race, would now need to determine how they could be most helpful, in cooperation with UNICEF and Governments, in attaining the goals adopted at the Summit. Many of them had already begun to develop new plans of action governing their commitment of resources in coming years.

(Mr. McLeary)

15. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) had represented a new expression of cooperation between four United Nations agencies and between those agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in the education sector. That close cooperation had been maintained by the creation of an inter-agency, inter-non-governmental organization network designed to facilitate follow-up to the Conference. The success of that model should encourage United Nations agencies to develop a coordinated strategy for supporting non-governmental organization networks by themes.

16. He noted the more important activities recently undertaken by non-governmental organizations, whose officials had jointly studied how cooperation with UNICEF could be developed. The increased dialogue with UNICEF at the decision-making level had strengthened the sense of common purpose. Programme staff from non-governmental organizations active in the field of nutrition had held an all-day consultation with UNICEF to discuss its strategies for the 1990s and ways of reducing child malnutrition by 50 per cent by the year 2000. Non-governmental organization experts had formed a world alliance for breast-feeding. In consonance with the World Summit, the seventh annual forum of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee (November 1991, Zimbabwe) would be devoted to effective participation in local and global child development, with a secondary goal of promoting North-South and South-South partnership among non-governmental organizations in response to the particularly difficult situation of many sub-Saharan countries. The non-governmental organizations newsletter Action for Children would be integrated with two UNICEF publications to create the new bimonthly publication, First Call. The non-governmental organizations coordinating group on Central and Eastern Europe was attempting, in consultation with UNICEF, to provide a more integrated and coordinated approach to activities in that region.

17. The Non-Governmental Organizations Committee, which for some years had been interested in children in especially difficult circumstances, was now focusing on their psychological needs. Thus, it had recently organized a seminar on children in time of war. Several meetings were planned to share information between non-governmental organizations and UNICEF on the girl child and to develop strategies to overcome obstacles to access by girls to education. The Committee had secured participation in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to ensure that the repercussions of environmental issues on children were placed on the agenda of the Conference and brought to the attention of non-governmental organizations. A Committee representative had been designated to liaise with the United Nations Commission on Social Development, which had been entrusted with responsibility for the International Year of the Family (1994). Lastly, in the course of the year, several organizations had joined the Committee, which now looked forward to further opportunities for dialogue with the UNICEF Executive Board and to strengthening the partnership which had grown over the years.

18. Mr. MIZUTANI (Rissho Kosei-kai Fund for Peace) said that Rissho Kosei-kai (RKK) was a lay Buddhist organization founded in 1938 which worked for peace and whose major scripture recognized the significance of children.

19. In July 1990, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, an inter-religious association founded in 1970 by religious leaders, had, with UNICEF cooperation, brought together, in the United States, 150 religious leaders from 40 countries in order to mobilize religions around the world in support of children. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Conference had been addressed to the six convening Heads of State or Government of the World Summit for Children. Since 1979 RKK had followed a campaign of forgoing one meal on three days of every month in order to donate the money so saved to its peace fund, which the organization used for assistance in fields such as development cooperation, disarmament, the environment and care for children. During the Gulf war, in addition to prayers for the immediate cessation of hostilities and a negotiated peaceful and enduring solution to the problems of the Middle East, RKK had formulated an action plan providing for the dispatch of fact-finding teams, financial assistance, the sending of volunteers for humanitarian assistance, peace seminars, and participation in UNICEF's fund-raising campaign. In response to the serious threat of malnutrition and epidemics, RKK had immediately allocated $150,000 for emergency supplies and, in cooperation with the Jordanian Red Crescent Society, had organized a direct delivery of powdered milk, wheat flour, generators and medical supplies to the people of Baghdad. RKK had raised $1.2 million for UNICEF's Gulf-related fund-raising campaign.

20. RKK, which questioned the morality of war, felt profound solidarity with UNICEF's efforts to promote the establishment of "corridors of peace" and "periods of tranquillity" in the midst of conflicts. His organization pledged to support UNICEF in its mission by mobilizing not only its own resources but by working together with the religions of the world for the well-being of children.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

21. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director, UNICEF) responded in succession to comments made by delegations.

22. He said that UNICEF was ready to provide as much assistance as possible to countries which might have difficulty in establishing national programmes of action, in accordance with paragraph 34 of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children.

23. He took note of the suggestions made by many delegations with regard to the role which UNICEF should play in Summit follow-up.

24. UNICEF, too, considered that it must focus on long-range impact and national capacity-building rather than on shorter-term targets that might overemphasize quantifiable results. UNICEF would not neglect programme

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delivery in favour of advocacy and information and mobilization activities. It remained committed to its first and foremost function, which was the source and object of its advocacy efforts. Over the past few years, when UNICEF had been involved in high-intensity advocacy and social mobilization, the level of programme delivery had accelerated, not slackened. Indeed, UNICEF's experience in country after country had been that advocacy and mobilization were essential for effective programme delivery. Developing countries in every region confirmed that view. Programme expenditure had grown steadily and was expected to increase by at least a further 25 per cent in 1992. Advocacy, far from diverting attention from activities which were of more direct benefit to children, attracted tangible resources which countries might otherwise have been tempted to refuse. He referred the Executive Board to document E/ICEF/1991/12 to provide an idea of UNICEF's efforts to respond to the promise and challenge of the World Summit for Children.

25. The World Summit had not expanded UNICEF's mandate, but had brought it an expanded partnership, enabling it to establish a reinvigorated grand alliance in the service of the world's children.

26. He assured the delegations which had expressed concern that follow-up work on the Convention on the Rights of the Child might lead to changes in UNICEF priorities, that there had been no proposals for programme activities in industrialized countries. Activities would be limited to the fields of advocacy and education for development, in which the National Committees could play an important role.

27. In order to promote "adjustment with a human face", UNICEF would encourage the international community to plan for sustainable development which emphasized poverty alleviation and the human dimensions of development. The Fund's efforts would be guided by the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, which focused on those two areas. UNICEF was currently working with UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Statistical Office and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to improve planning activities and was cooperating with UNDP to assist countries in formulating realistic human development strategies; that would undoubtedly contribute to the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. It should also be noted that, in their transition to market-oriented economies, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would also face the problem of the social dimension of structural adjustment programmes.

28. While the Fund supported by a number of countries, was seeking to develop activities in the area of debt relief for children, it had no intention of becoming involved in the substantive discussions on debt forgiveness, which were the prerogative of sovereign States and the specialized agencies. The UNICEF initiative was designed to work within the structures established for the ongoing dialogue, which would enable it to obtain additional local currency resources for approved programmes. Thus, in the Sudan, several debt-for-development swaps had generated more than $US 2 million in local

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currency for water supply and sanitation programmes. In general, enormous gains could be made if some element of a "peace dividend" could be brought into national development assistance budgets.

29. A sound development programme was one which could be durably integrated into national activities. UNICEF took that matter very seriously and considered it in all its aspects: political, technical, managerial and financial. Taking the universal child immunization programme as an example, he said that sustainability had both a supplies and equipment part and a structural part. Supplies and equipment would be provided to a country until it considered itself ready to produce its own. Structures could be used for different purposes and, once in place, could be applied to programmes other than the ones for which they had originally been developed. A major purpose of the Bamako Initiative was to revitalize or build those structures. It was clear that, if national capacities could not be strengthened, development efforts would fail. UNICEF had focused on national capacity-building in all its programmes by trying to avoid parallel structures, employing nationals and working with national institutions of all kinds. In a number of African countries, UNICEF had initiated a national capacity-building programme, which was built on the working relationship established between government departments, universities and communities; the Programme would soon be extended to other African countries. UNICEF had submitted a supplementary funded proposal to the Executive Board on that activity, and the Fund's implementation of the Bamako Initiative promoted the establishment of national primary health care structures and empowered communities to be more self-reliant and able to manage their own affairs.

30. Donors from developed countries had provided generous financial support for the universal child immunization programme; at the same time, the largest contributions - financial and otherwise - had come from the developing countries themselves. UNICEF would have to sustain its excellent achievements and develop strategies to eradicate diseases. The structures created for the universal child immunization programme could be used both to implement other programmes and to reinforce national primary health care structures. In cooperation with WHO, UNICEF had developed a children's vaccine initiative, and it was continuing to build on that cooperation, which included UNDP as a full partner.

31. The establishment of sustainable, well-managed and adequately financed health care systems to groups which did not yet benefit from them, as provided for in the Bamako Initiative, remained a UNICEF priority. However, without effective prioritization and integration of various actions within health services, progress in one area could be detrimental to equally important actions in others. The establishment of parallel health infrastructures which lacked coordination was a waste of resources. The Secretariat looked forward to hearing the views of the Programme Committee on the various complementary actions required for the effective implementation of the Bamako Initiative. UNICEF was increasing its support to field monitoring systems and operations

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research specifically focused on equity issues. The Fund was interested in expanding its cooperation with other agencies, such as the World Bank, WHO, and the International Children's Centre in Paris. It worked closely with WHO at all levels; WHO had taken part in the development of the policy guidelines of the Bamako Initiative and in the organization of the 1990 Pan-African Conference on the Financing of Community Health Activities and of a recent meeting on organizing operations research in the rational use of drugs.

32. UNICEF was also seriously concerned about the impact of AIDS on children. Together with its partners, it hoped to carry out preventive activities to educate the public, focusing first on a few countries in order to determine the most effective means of conducting those activities. The Fund also hoped to enable many countries to profit from the considerable experience it had gained in Uganda.

33. UNICEF had been accused of "burying" the issue of family planning under other issues such as women's health and safe motherhood. However, all those issues were related. Family planning had many aspects, and experience had shown that the best programmes were those which sought to improve the status of women and promote female education and safe motherhood. The Fund's activities were aimed at helping those programmes to succeed. For example, by promoting breast-feeding, UNICEF ensured the survival of first children; because of the survival of first children, parents no longer felt the need to have more. The Fund also promoted child spacing by seeking to make women aware that poorly timed pregnancies were dangerous to their health. It would be difficult to claim that the Fund's position on family planning lacked understanding and compassion; the UNICEF position on the subject was set forth very clearly in the 1991 State of the World's Children report. Moreover, the joint letter which UNICEF had published together with UNDP, UNFPA and WHO should provide reassurance that the Fund intended to pursue its family planning activities, which would complement those of the other agencies.

. UNICEF should endeavour to alleviate the suffering of children in especially difficult circumstances, in particular those trapped in armed conflicts. The Fund's activities would include immunization to prevent epidemics, rehabilitation through the use of prosthetics, and detraumatization programmes, an area in which UNICEF was heavily involved. The Fund should also consider the problems of other children living in particularly deplorable conditions, modifying its activities depending on the magnitude and seriousness of the problem.

35. Environment was an issue which none could avoid, but UNICEF would not give it priority at the expense of its other programmes. All its activities were mutually supportive: successful child survival/child spacing programmes, basic education, water supply and sanitation, household food security, the use of appropriate technology and social forestry would all contribute to a better environment for children. UNICEF was fully involved in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - whose

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Secretary-General would like to make it the ecological equivalent of the World Summit for Children - and its working relationship with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was very close. He hoped to intensify activities in environmental education and social forestry.

36. Education would in the decade ahead be the major growth area for UNICEF and it was scheduled for a several-fold increase in financial support.

37. Concern had been expressed that the proportion of country programmes favouring the integration of women in development was too small, and UNICEF would place further emphasis on the issue in coming months. It should be noted that an additional 30 per cent of country programmes were making substantial progress in focusing on women's needs.

38. Closer cooperation among United Nations agencies and bilateral organizations engaged in water supply and sanitation projects continued to be a UNICEF priority.

39. UNICEF was working closely with other agencies of the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to establish relief and rehabilitation programmes throughout the Horn of Africa, but in many cases it had not had access to the worst affected areas. Furthermore, its emergency appeals for Africa remained to a large extent unfunded. The programme for South African children and women approved by the Executive Board in 1990 had gained momentum. Links with the vast network of non-racial non-governmental organizations in South Africa, in coordination with the liberation movements, had been strengthened. The continuing impact of apartheid on children and women in the region would soon be documented in a third edition of Children on the Front Line. UNICEF was committed to helping reverse the growing rates of child and maternal mortality in Africa before the year 2000. It was giving priority to expanding the support for sustainable primary health care through the Bamako Initiative. It would take an active part in the World Health Organization (WHO) ministerial meeting on malaria.

40. He himself felt that Executive Board resolution 1990/5 remained valid for UNICEF's work in central and eastern Europe, unless the Board believed that a change in approach was needed, or an interpretation of its role in emergencies. To date, UNICEF had held to the letter and spirit of that resolution in conducting workshops on issues affecting the children of that region and in promoting analytical studies coordinated by the International Child Development Centre in Florence. The situation analysis initiated in Bulgaria and the similar exercises that would be undertaken in 1991, in Albania for instance, would give a clear picture of the current condition of the children. Interested Governments could use the information gathered to prepare a programme of action for children as stipulated in paragraph 34 of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. UNICEF was also formulating a programme of assistance, with special funding from the German

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Committee for UNICEF, for children affected by the Chernobyl disaster, to whom it was currently sending medical supplies. But the secretariat had no intention of launching any long-term, major cooperation programme in central and eastern Europe or in any of the industrialized countries.

41. UNICEF agreed that when emergency assistance was required, it was very important for United Nations agencies to coordinate action within the system and with non-governmental organizations, and it was actively promoting such coordination. UNICEF had been in the forefront in both the establishment of United Nations coordinating mechanisms - for example, the Office of Emergency Operations for Africa in 1984 - and in the country-level response - for example, the operations in the Sudan, Angola and Liberia. However, the establishment of full coordinating structures took time, since not all agencies moved at the same pace and the situation in the field was sometimes confused. In any division of tasks, UNICEF's comparative advantages were its emergency fund-raising capabilities and its ability to deliver emergency assistance quickly, the presence on the scene of fully operational field personnel, and its emergency stockpiles which were made available also to other aid agencies. UNICEF always attempted to integrate its contributions into the consolidated funds raised by the inter-agency appeals. When it utilized its own fund-raising mechanisms, it did so to finance its portion of the total United Nations contribution, generally addressing non-food requirements, and it always did so after consultation with other agencies and with the specific encouragement of the Secretary-General.

42. In his opening statement to the Board he had stressed the importance of working closely with all UNICEF partners. Inter-agency collaboration had developed considerably, but there was no question that more could be done by drawing upon the International Development Strategy, General Assembly resolution 44/211, the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Paris, 1990) and the leadership role of the Director-General in international economic cooperation. Inter-agency collaboration in emergencies needed to be considerably improved, and the forthcoming review by the Economic and Social Council would provide an opportunity to do so.

43. The continued focus of the external relations functions - programme advocacy and resource mobilization - would be on supporting the work of the field offices and the National Committees for UNICEF. The roles of the various units responsible for external operations were clarified in the publication entitled Who Does What in External Relations UNICEF fully intended to give more attention to advocacy in field office activities - which was why the budget estimates proposed a strengthening of the Division of Information. UNICEF was also working hard to carry out Executive Board resolution 1990/14. The budget estimates further provided for setting up a structure in Europe that could provide increased support to the European National Committees for UNICEF. It recognized those National Committees as genuine and full partners and would study attentively the interesting

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suggestions they had offered. He could already assure them that the indispensable flexibility and efficiency of the Greeting Card Operation would be maintained. It was crucial to keep the National Committees well informed, since that directly affected the image of UNICEF. The issue of UNICEF prestige would be a major agenda item at a workshop to be held in June 1991 for representatives of the National Committees and the field offices. The UNICEF staff were working as an integrated team to follow up on the suggestions both had made.

44. The Grand Alliance between Governments and a wide range of sectors of society must be sustained, further strengthened and enlarged to fulfil the promises of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. Non-governmental organizations, for example, owing to their networks at the grass-roots level, were powerful forces for bringing about changes in attitudes, developing innovative approaches in difficult situations and supplementing the efforts of Governments.

45. A number of countries felt that contributions in support of UNICEF should be more equitably forthcoming from donor countries. That issue was particularly important since official development assistance might become more limited in the 1990s.

46. The fact that the issue of the transparency of the UNICEF budget had been raised over the past several years indicated that the new format of the budget, which had been approved by the Executive Board in 1990, still left much to be desired. The Fund's secretariat would welcome suggestions during the discussions of the Committee on Administration and Finance and would study the way in which the budgets of other organizations were presented, if that could be useful.

47. UNICEF was fully aware that income projections might be uncertain because of the budget constraints facing donor Governments and the fact that the extraordinary growth in contributions by some countries could not last. For that reason, the Fund had based its projections not on the average annual growth rate of general resources during the previous five years (17 per cent), but on a much lower figure, for example the five-per-cent annual growth rate assumed in the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1994. It had been based on the results of the Pledging Conference in 1990, discussions with several major donors and the increased potential of income from the Greeting Card Operation. To date, income had largely exceeded expectations. While the Fund had set a very conservative income projection, it nevertheless intended to be more ambitious in its fund-raising strategy in order to benefit from the positive impact of the current political climate, which was conducive to cooperative action for children and social progress. The average annual growth rate of planned expenditures, which was approximately 10 per cent, was slightly less than that of income.

(Mr. Grant)

48. The view that UNICEF financed a sizeable number of the organization's non-project staff from project funds seemed to be based on the belief that all expenditures at headquarters were administrative costs. The staff which provided support from headquarters for field offices (purchase of supplies, recruitment and training of staff, financial management and monitoring of field operations) were directly involved in project delivery. Furthermore, the Executive Board knew that general resources should not be used to subsidize supplementary-funded projects. The growing volume of such projects required project-funded support posts at headquarters. If, contrary to the guidance of the Executive Board until the mid-1980s, there was to be no increase in the number of those posts, there would have to be significant growth in core posts and a consequent subsidization of noted projects by general resources. The secretariat sought the Board's further guidance on that matter.

49. He stressed once again that the rate of increase in total posts at headquarters had been substantially less than the rate of increase of total posts in the field over the previous 10 years and that in 1992 there would be 31 fewer posts than in 1982. The Board of Auditors had stated in 1990 that the necessary strengthening of field offices could not occur without some further strengthening of the support capacity at headquarters. The need to increase activities to improve the situation of women and children and increase support for those activities had made the secretariat propose an increase in administrative and programme support for countries programmes. Nevertheless, the proportion of total expenditures devoted to the administrative budget and programme support budget had decreased from 25.5 per cent in 1984 to 20.2 per cent in the current proposed budget.

50. The 1990-1991 budgetary reserves had been used mainly to cover mandatory increases amounting to $2,850,000 (salaries, rent increases, and increases in external auditing and other costs). Out of the $3 million spent, only $150,000 had been used to cover miscellaneous increases.

51. With regard to the need for a contingency plan in case actual income was lower than projected income, it should be kept in mind that the income projections of the medium-term plan were revised annually on the basis of actual income received and the latest information available. If actual income was less than that forecast, the projected expenditures were reduced accordingly. Given the moderate forecast in general resource growth, it was unlikely that UNICEF would be faced with such a situation. However, if actual income is more than that forecast, it could be used to increase programme expenditures, but could not in any case be allocated to the administrative budget already approved, which the secretariat could revise if income is lower, but could not if income is higher.

52. With regard to the composition of UNICEF staff, 35 per cent of staff in the Professional category were women, of whom 57 per cent came from developing countries. The Division of Personnel would take account of the situation of non-represented countries when planning future recruitment missions.

(Mr. Grant)

53. When the Executive Board had decided in 1990 to postpone until the 1991 session its decision on UNICEF office space, the Fund, which had had immediate needs to be met, had entered into short-term leases which were very inexpensive compared to other New York prices. In order to cover those costs, the Director-General had decided to postpone some activities planned for the first year of the biennium 1990-1991 to the biennium 1992-1993. He believed that it had been within his authority to take that decision. The secretariat would discuss that topic thoroughly with the Committee on Administration and Finance.

54. As he had already indicated in his opening statement, the Director-General felt that there was a contradiction between the conclusions of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and those of the Board of Auditors. The explanations which the Chairman of ACABQ would provide to the Committee on Administration and Finance would be especially important because ACABQ itself had had very little time to review the budget proposals with the secretariat, and the Executive Board had not had the time either to give proper consideration to the report of the Advisory Committee. The Board of Auditors had based its observations and recommendations on a thorough and methodical review of the situation on-site over two periods, each consisting of many weeks. It was of paramount importance to ensure that UNICEF headquarters was in a position to provide adequate monitoring, supervision and support of effective programme delivery in the field.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 3 May 1991, at 5.25 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. PALME (Sweden)

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Preparation for future sessions and review of documentation

This record is subject to correction.

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The meeting was called to order at 5.25 p.m.

PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5 and CRP.6)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the Board had before it two documents, one dealing with the criteria governing election of UNICEF representatives on joint committees (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5) and the other with future work and procedures of the Executive Board (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6).

2. Ms. KITTANI (Deputy Secretary of the Board), referring in connection with document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6 to the list of requests for reports and policy papers made during the current session, which had just been distributed, said that the Secretariat would welcome guidance from Board members on the possible combination of the reports or papers requested in the light of the decisions that had been adopted with a view to reducing the volume of documentation.

3. Mr. PETTIT (United Kingdom) noted first that the Board should in considering agenda item 5 take into account the extremely relevant remarks made by the German delegation in the Programme Committee on the subject of draft proposals. Since there was no time to prepare a draft decision on the item under consideration, the lessons drawn from the organizational session held in February should now be codified.

4. His delegation wished to propose two changes of procedure: the 24-hour time-limit for the submission of a proposal under a given item should run from the conclusion, rather than the opening, of the debate, so as to encourage sponsors to take into account the issues raised during the debate. The second change would be aimed at limiting the length of the preamble of any draft decision, a practice which was already followed in other bodies.

5. With regard to the requests for reports or papers, any reasonable combination would be acceptable.

6. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico), referring to the questions raised in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6, said that the idea of holding parallel meetings was unacceptable. The time had come to demonstrate a sense of realism. The volume of the Board's work made it necessary to lengthen the sessions. The Bureau should be requested to draw up a proposal to that effect for consideration at the June 1991 session. The list of requested documentation for the 1992 session should be considerably shortened. Her delegation supported document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5 on the criteria for election of UNICEF representatives on joint committees.

7. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Observer for Norway), noting that delegations had not shown the necessary restraint where requests for reports or papers were concerned, suggested that the Bureau should be given responsibility for making an effort, in consultation with the Secretariat, to combine the reports requested or incorporate them in the overall report of the Executive Director in order to limit the volume of documentation.

8. Mr. McARTHUR (United States of America) commended the Secretariat on having submitted the documentation on time, thus greatly facilitating delegations' work. The importance of respecting deadlines could not be overemphasized, since late appearance of documents prevented a fruitful exchange of views, as had been the case at the organizational session in February.

9. With regard to some of the questions listed in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6, his delegation, while supporting all initiatives aimed at limiting documentation, nevertheless felt that it was impossible at the present stage to define more closely issues which might be the subject of biennial reports. The Board should continue to show flexibility in that regard.

10. He supported the recommendation relating to country programmes. UNICEF should seek to maintain the quality of documents, which had in fact perceptibly decreased, while reducing their length. It would be useful, for example, to present in tabular form the data on budget estimates and the proposals relating to staffing. The omission from the country programmes of the extremely useful statistics that had previously appeared on the back of the cover page was regrettable. For convenience, it would be desirable to indicate on the documents the relevant agenda item or items. In accordance with the provisions of Executive Board decision 1990/1, any proposal involving expenditure should be accompanied by an estimate of the budgetary implications, so as to facilitate interaction between the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance.

11. With respect to the duration of the Board's regular sessions, the United States considered the two weeks allocated to be sufficient. Delegations therefore needed to be punctual in order to avoid wasting valuable time. Another important point regarding in the rationalization of work was that the Secretariat should refrain, except where absolutely necessary, from radically changing agenda items at the last minute.

12. With regard to the issue of holding inter-sessional meetings, he would like to know who would participate in such meetings. UNICEF could facilitate participation by Board members in meetings, seminars or conferences held throughout the year, for example at the International Child Development Centre in Florence, by notifying them in advance of the dates of such meetings.

13. Lastly, he supported the recommendations contained in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5, and would like to know the procedure for designating alternates for a given session.

14. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) said that the Bureau should continue to keep the Board's working method under review, since the majority of delegations had not made known their views on the issues raised in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6. The Board's increasingly heavy agenda had necessitated the holding of night meetings, a practice which was particularly burdensome for small delegations like his own and should not become institutionalized.

(Mr. Fernandez, Liberia)

15. With regard to the duration of the Board's regular sessions, he had argued at the organizational session that it should be extended. That was also the view of the Mexican delegation. Three additional days would perhaps suffice.

16. With regard to the United Kingdom's suggestion that the deadline set for submission of proposals under a given item should run from the conclusion of the debate, a procedure which was followed by many bodies, it would have the drawback of unduly postponing the consideration of proposals.

17. Miss ZINDORA (Zimbabwe) said she would confine herself at the present late stage to associating herself with the remarks of the representatives of Mexico and Liberia regarding the lengthening of Executive Board sessions. It was indeed becoming increasingly difficult to give in-depth consideration to the increasingly numerous issues included in the agenda.

18. Mr. ABU SALIH (Sudan) said that the title of conference room paper E/ICEF/1991/CRP.4 should be brought into line with the wording of the relevant resolution.

19. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of the Sudan that the secretariat would make the necessary correction. As to the comments made regarding the Executive Board's procedures and working methods, the Bureau would consider them at the organizational session to be held in June 1991.

20. Mr. HIMES (Director, International Child Development Centre) said he was pleased to announce that an agreement extending Italy's support for the Centre from August 1991 to August 1994 had recently been concluded with UNICEF. That agreement showed the importance the Italian Government attached to cooperation with UNICEF. The interest shown in the work of the Centre by Executive Board members was grounds for great satisfaction.

21. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director) said that UNICEF was extremely grateful to the Italian Government for the support extended to the Centre in Florence, whose outstanding contribution to the protection of children had several times been highlighted during the course of the session.

22. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Council would hold its 11th meeting after a short break.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.